

Deuteronomy 20:10-20 - 21:1-23 - Thursday, October 20th, 2011

(10) "When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. (11) And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people *who are* found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you.
- Moses now goes from giving them instructions for entering into a war, to giving them instructions for entering into peace, by proclaiming an offer.
- The thought is that these particular cities were outside the borders of the Promised-Land. God didn't want them going to battle unnecessarily.
- In the event that the proposal of a peace agreement was accepted by one of these cities, they were to be under the authority of the Israelites.

(12) Now if *the city* will not make peace with you, but war against you, then you shall besiege it. (13) And when the LORD your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword. (14) But the women, the little ones, the livestock, and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself; and you shall eat the enemies' plunder which the LORD your God gives you.

- It's passages like this one that get a lot of bad press by the world because they paint the God of the Bible as harsh and not a peace-loving God.
- It's for this reason that I think we'd be grossly remiss were we not to take a closer look at this and attempt to answer the why behind the what.
- First, let's try and tackle the killing of every male by the edge of the sword. It's believed this was done so that the enemy couldn't seek revenge.

- As for the livestock, and all the spoil of the city being taken as a plunder, this was in keeping with the customs of warfare back in those days.
- In other words, this is how the army got paid back then. I suppose you could say that they weren't on a salary, rather it was straight commission.

(15) Thus you shall do to all the cities *which are* very far from you, which *are* not of the cities of these nations. (16) "But of the cities of these peoples which the LORD your God gives you *as* an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, (17) but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the LORD your God has commanded you, (18) lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God.

- It's important to note that Moses is delineating between the cities which were far from them, and the cities that were close in proximity to them.
- Not making this distinction has the potential to misunderstand yet another difficult passage as it relates to the perception of God being unjust.
- The cities within the boundaries of the Promised-Land were to be utterly destroyed to protect the Israelites from learning their abominations.

- Furthermore, God had given the cities that were in the Promised-Land four hundred years to repent, but they didn't. They had sealed their fate.
- God's judgment was to be meted out by the Israelites as a twofold effect of protecting the Israelites and putting out of misery the other - "ites."
- I'm in the camp that believes there will be different levels of punishment in Hell based on what Jesus said about fewer blows in Luke 12:48.

- There's a profound life lesson that I need to point out here before we finish the chapter, and it's one that could easily be missed at first glance.
- They weren't to make peace with those nations in the Promised-Land because they would corrupt, pervert, and ultimately destroy the Israelites.
- Conversely, the cities which were outside of the boundaries of the Promised-Land would not be much of an influence by virtue of their distance.

- Now, here's the take away from all of this, if instead of mortifying the deeds of the flesh, I make peace with the flesh, it will ultimately destroy me.
- By way of both illustration and application consider how prone we are to allow certain practices, and or people, to live next door to as neighbors.
- The lesson here becomes crystal clear; never underestimate the ungodly influence those Amorites and Canaanite's can have in our lives today.

(19) "When you besiege a city for a long time, while making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them; if you can eat of them, do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field *is* man's food. (20) Only the trees which you know *are* not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, to build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it is subdued.

- OK, why would God have Moses command them to only cut down the trees that didn't bear fruit for their use as lumber in laying siege of a city?
- Here's a thought, God didn't want them to have the mindset of instant gratification. The immediate need was for lumber as fuel and to build with.
- The cost of and in their haste to meet the need for short term fuel, would come at the expense of their ability to meet the need for long term fruit.

- You probably know where I'm going with this and are probably hoping that I'm going to finally close with this but how true is this for me and you?
- If you were to ask me what I thought one of the most perilous problems in our Christian lives would be, this would have to be right at the top!
- A microwaved drive-through Christian life comes at the expense of bearing fruit in a Christian's life. Shorten the process = cheapen the product.

Deuteronomy 21 - (1) "If *anyone* is found slain, lying in the field in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess, *and* it is not known who killed him, (2) then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure *the distance* from the slain man to the surrounding cities. (3) And it shall be *that* the elders of the city nearest to the slain man will take a heifer which has not been worked *and* which has not pulled with a yoke. (4) The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with flowing water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. (5) Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; by their word every controversy and every assault shall be *settled*. (6) And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain *man* shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley. (7) Then they shall answer and say, 'Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it. (8) Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel.' And atonement shall be provided on their behalf for the blood. (9) So you shall put away the *guilt* of innocent blood from among you when you do *what is* right in the sight of the LORD.

- In these first nine verses Moses hones in on a most important life principle which at first glance could be easily missed and quickly read through.
- This is dealing with the matter of someone getting away with murder literally, and what the children of Israel were to do about it once in the land.
- This "unsolved mystery" was not to become a cold case, rather, the elders of the city closest in proximity to the murder were to settle the matter.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is it's profound and powerful application to us in our lives today as believers.
- I believe that this speaks to how it is that there will be those who will seemingly "get away with murder," within a body of believers in a church.
- When someone sows discord, causes division, or murders someone with their jealous gossip, it'll wreak havoc in a church if it's not dealt with.

- There are several observations that I would like to make in light of this with the hopes that we can better understand how all of this applies to us.
- First, notice that they would determine who's authority and responsibility the matter would be directed to based on which elders were closest.
- In other words, those closest in proximity to the unsolved murder were responsible to deal with the matter because it was under their leadership.

- Second, they were to take a heifer that was still young and innocent, having never plowed, sown, or bore a yoke, and they were to sacrifice it.
- Third, the priests washed their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken as a symbolic gesture of declaring their innocence in the matter.
- Fourth, they were to provide atonement for the Israelites so as to "put away the guilt of innocent blood," as it was right in the sight of the Lord.

1. When someone "gets away with ____," the burden of dealing with it, and the hurt coming from it, always falls on those who were closest to it.
2. When someone "gets away with ____," the ones who suffer the most are usually younger in the faith, and more innocent being new to the faith.
3. When someone "gets away with ____," the ones in leadership end up sacrificing the most, in terms of their time, energy, health and resources.
4. When someone "gets away with ____," the leaders, though their hearts/necks are broken, have to wash their hands to declare their innocence.
5. When someone "gets away with ____," the way to put away the guilt of those doing wrong is to do what's right and provide atoning protection.

(10) "When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, (11) and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, (12) then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. (13) She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. (14) And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free, but you certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her brutally, because you have humbled her.

- How strange is this? What in the world is this about? Well, it's been suggested that it has to do with the Israelites treating women with respect.
- In other words, God didn't want them to mistreat or worse yet abuse the women who were captured from the cities that the Israelites conquered.
- Moses takes it a step further telling them what God commands they do in the event that an Israelite man wanted to marry one of these women.

- I would suggest that the weird and odd nature of what they were to do has invaluable wisdom for young people who are considering marriage.
- First, she was to shave off all her hair, and trim her nails short, then she was to change her wardrobe from what was the fashion of the day.
- Then, she would mourn the loss of her father and mother for a full month and during this time she was to live in the home with the man's family.

- At the end of the one month period of time, the young man chose to not marry her, she was free to go, but she was not to be sold for money.
- Now, there's a template of sorts, in the sense that this provides some good counsel for those wishing to get married, before they get married.
- What follows are several steps that any couple would do well to consider in both their courtship and the engagement period of their relationship.

1. The couple needs to discern whether or not their attraction to each other is solely on the basis of their physical beauty, i.e. shaving of the hair.
2. It is vitally important that they understand the dynamics of being single as opposed to being married, i.e. putting away, the fashion of the day.
3. They have to address the in-laws undue influence or it will be a huge detriment to a harmonious marriage, i.e. mourning her father and mother.
4. There must be a period of time in which they get to know each other by spending time with their family, i.e. living in the home for a full month.
5. If they decide to not marry, then they should be freed from the relationship without manipulation, shame, or guilt, i.e. the selling or brutality.

- I am keenly aware that most of us here at this Bible study, perhaps for the exception of a few, are long past this, but please don't dismiss this.
- Here's why; as we grow old together, evidenced by the departure of physical beauty, we can mature in our love for the persons inward beauty.
- Also, as our children become adults, we can impart to them wise and godly counsel as opposed to having a manipulative influence over them.

(15) "If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and they have borne him children, *both* the loved and the unloved, and *if* the firstborn son is of her who is unloved, (16) then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his possessions to his sons, *that* he must not bestow firstborn status on the son of the loved wife in preference to the son of the unloved, the *true* firstborn. (17) But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he *is* the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his.

- This is one of those places in the Bible that creates difficulty for believers because it deals with polygamy, which is having more than one wife.
- I'll address this matter first, then we'll move onto the greater issue here in the text, which is the matter of the children, namely the firstborn son.
- Regarding Polygamy, it's important to know and understand that it was practiced at this time for the benefit of the women and their security.

- Because of war, the men of that day were significantly fewer in number than the women, leaving them without a husband, and thus provision.
- This would often times force these single women into a life of prostitution and slavery because that was the only way that they could survive.
- However, if the women were to marry a man who already had other wives, she would be both protected and provided for in having children.

- Furthermore, polygamy would serve to populate the earth more effectively and rapidly by virtue of more children being born to multiple wives.
- Now, this brings up the question of the modern day practice of polygamy. First, let me say that Biblically, the model for marriage is monogamy.
- If monogamy is Biblical and polygamy isn't, why did God allow it? It's not so much that God was allowing polygamy, He's restoring monogamy.

- Now to the chief lesson from the passage. Moses is reinforcing the important role of the first born son especially when it came to the inheritance.
- Even to this day, in the Middle-East culture, the majority of the inheritance is given to the firstborn son who then becomes the head of the family.
- I think this also speaks to the importance of what we leave our children spiritually, as well as financially, by investing in them and giving to them.

(18) "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and *who*, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, (19) then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. (20) And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' (21) Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.

- Moses goes from young women, multiple wives, and firstborn sons, to rebellious children. Here he says parents are to bring them to the elders.
- Then, all the men of the city were to stone the rebellious son to death, putting away the evil from them, in order for all Israel to hear and fear.
- Needless to say, parents would rarely have a problem with their children rebelling, as this would become a very powerful deterrent for them.

(22) "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, (23) his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged *is* accursed of God.

- This answers a number of questions and fills in all the blanks as it relates to everything we've just read in this chapter. It's a great way to end.
- Here's what I'm thinking; to the rebellious son we just read about, this is the perfect Son hanging on a Calvary tree, reconciling the prodigal son.
- Jesus is also the one Who makes it possible with the one who gets away with murder to enter into heaven as the criminal on the cross would.

- Not only is He the inheritance for us, His firstborn sons and daughters, He's also the bridegroom to those needing both protection and provision.
- He protects us while we're in this world, He provides for us salvation in the next world of eternity, and in so doing He redeems us from the curse.

Galatians 3:13 NIV Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."